

The In-Between by CrossedBeams

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016), The X-Files

Genre: Crossover, Drabble, Ficlet, Other, Short One Shot

Language: English

Characters: Dana Scully, Eleven (Stranger Things)

Status: Completed

Published: 2016-08-30

Updated: 2016-08-30

Packaged: 2022-03-31 22:54:01

Rating: General Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 1,006

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Somewhere between this world and the upside down, between life and death, is a lake. One Breath era for X-Files, post S1 Stranger Things.

The In-Between

She has never known stillness like the lake. It's a glassy pure kind of silence, like the second after a bell stops ringing before everything remembers how to start up again. She can't remember the last time she stopped like this, the last time she was completely untethered from schedules and deadlines and expectations. Right from conception there's a due date, charts to be measured against and appointments to be kept. Maybe the heady meeting of two cells is the last moment of truly reckless freedom a human can experience. Unless they end up here.

Scully does not know where here is. It looks like a boat, drifting impossibly still on a misty mirror. She's pretty sure it's not actually a boat, some annoying voice from her past noting the lack of waves against the edge, the lack of ebb and flow and wave and all the things that make water watery. She ignores the voice though. On the lake water doesn't need to behave how it's expected to, waves don't have to crest and fall and Dana Katherine Scully does not have to be Dana Katherine Scully. She's just a body, on a boat and it is all so very quiet.

There's a rope at the end of the boat tethered to something she cannot see. She wonders idly what would happen if she untied the knot, cast herself loose in the halycon lake and just let it all go. But sometimes there are flashes of somebody holding the other end of that rope, people she loved before this place with red eyes and wild hair and noses that are too big for their faces. So she leaves the rope where it is and sits utterly, decadently still.

It's the same for the noises behind her, the grumbling echo of Ahab calling for a shipmate when she lets her mind wander into the maybes of what she cannot see. But she doesn't want to turn around, she doesn't want to move or be anything more than still and quiet and safe.

She marvels at how afraid she has always been of stopping, as if death or age or some other faceless evil would catch her if she allowed herself to breathe. There was a glory in the headlong rush of her life, in leaping into the unknown and constantly, endlessly

searching for the next, the better and the best.

But not on the lake. The lake has no seasons and no time. She could sit here forever. Maybe she will, until she and the boat rots into the hushed shine of the water and melt into atoms. That's her current plan anyway.

Until the day the sky falls.

Darkness plunges into the water with an unholy scream, ruffling her oasis with blood and anger before drowning and turning the water black. The silence afterwards is somehow less complete, less comforting and then there's a girl in the water, floating face up in a short pink dress, eyes shut and nose bloody. Something comes back to Scully then, some hippocratic need and before she consciously decides to move the girl is in the boat and the big black coat that she must have been wearing all this time is a shroud for the small body.

Scully tries to go back to sitting but the stillness is full of questions. This was her place, her placid purgatory and now there is a girl with a buzzcut who is breathing only very slightly to worry about.

Somewhere a clock starts ticking again and the water of the lake begins to tug at the boat, nudging it ever so softly in the direction of the rope. The mist off the lake for the first time feels cold and under the coat the girl shivers her eyes open and watches Scully with something between fear and numbness.

Scully watches back, words still feel too heavy to be spoken aloud but she begins to remember their weight, to comprehend their necessity and wonder about the number "Eleven" tattooed on the child's arm.

She feels a flash of anger at that. Heat! She had forgotten heat This time it is for anger, for the kind of person who would scar an innocent but Scully recalls other warmths, brief caresses rooted in friendship but promising so much more. There are no promises on the lake, only quiet and with these memories comes desire, another heat, a burning need to finish things started and speak ideas she hadn't even been conscious of forming.

She speaks now. A question for the child who is sitting, small and

pale in the folds of the jacket. Just one word - to test it all out.

“Eleven?” she whispers, surprised at the clarity of her voice, she had been expecting a husk but the sound carries across the water and the echo sends birds up from trees she hadn’t even noticed were gathered on the banks.

Eleven nods, touching her chest in recognition. Then she touches her face, find the blood gone, washed into the lake with the darkness and Scully’s doubts that breaking the silence was the right thing to do. The sound makes things feel real, for the first time in forever.

“Where are we” she asks, and for the first time Scully looks around, looks at the taut rope that points the way home and the wall of mist behind that will take them into oblivion.

She smiles. Another small warmth that is reflected back on the child’s lips, reminding them both that they are somehow the same, they are human, they are alive. Scully steps into the bow and unties the rope, gathering the end into her lap and beginning to coil it in, to drag them back to the hurt and the heart of reality and out of this strange liminal place.

“I don’t know”, she answers, the lake is not yet a place for false confidence or half-truths. “I think it’s somewhere in-between”.

Eleven nods and turns her face to the growing light.

Author's Note:

A mad idea and 20 minutes led me here. No beta, little reworking, just thoughts and images that came to me when this scenario presented itself to my insomniac mind.